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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE FRENCH ACADEMY:

its origin and history; its functions; its significance.

- by -

Gertrude Mary Crowe

(A.B. Boston University, 1929)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

1934

p7821

The French Academy: its origin and history; its functions; its significance.

	Page
I. Its Origin and History	1
A. Early French prototypes	
B. The French Academy of the Old Regime, 1635 (4) - 1793	6
1. Meetings at Conrart's	
2. Richelieu sponsors state recognition of the group	8
a. Statutes and Regulations of "Académie Française"	
b. Academy's activities	
3. Protectorate of Chancellor Séguier, 1642-1672	22
a. Meetings held at his home	
b. Public admitted to receptions of new members	
c. First prize awards	
4. Protectorate of Louis XIV	23
a. Favors conferred on Academicians	
1. Apartment in the Louvre	
2. Tokens of Attendance	
3. Appearance of fauteuils	
4. Right of Committimus	
5. Equality among members stressed	

The French Academy: its origin and history:

its functions: its significance.

Page

I. Its Origin and History 1

A. Early French prototypes

B. The French Academy of the Old Regime, 1635 (4) - 1793 6

1. Meetings at Conrart's

2. Richelieu sponsors state recognition of the group 8

a. Statutes and Regulations of "Académie Française"

b. Academy's activities

3. Protectorate of Chancellor Séguier, 1642-1672 22

a. Meetings held at his home

b. Public admitted to receptions of new members

c. First prize awards

4. Protectorate of Louis XIV 23

a. Favors conferred on Academicians

1. Apartment in the Louvre

2. Tokens of Attendance

3. Appearance of fauteuils

4. Right of Committions

5. Equality among members stressed

Page

b. Progress of work

1. First edition of Dictionary published

a. Furetière incident

5. Protectorate of Louis XV 28

a. Appearance of Philosophers among new members

b. Symptoms of estrangement between protector and Academy

6. Protectorate of Louis XVI 32

a. Public less cordial towards Academy

1. Questions utility of Academy

a. Attitude reflects revolutionary tendency of times

b. Suppression of all academies

C. Era of Suppression, 1793-1803 36

1. Period of terror, 1793-1794

2. 1795 - National Institute established

a. Adoption of a definite uniform

3. Attempt to reestablish French Academy

a. Napoleon refuses consent

D. As Second Class (French Language and Literature) of the Institute, 1803-1816 38

1. Reorganization of the Institute into four classes

2. Some original customs revived

a. Nominations submitted for confirmation

Page

Page

b. Referred to as "Academicians"

c. Reception oration

d. Compensation for members

e. Meetings in Louvre, 1803-1805

1. In Collège Mazarin, 1805-1815

f. Prizes established

E. The Modern French Academy, 1816 - 41

1. Member of the Institute of France

a. So-called after second reorganization

1. Original name restored to each class

2. Its activities

II. Its Functions 43

A. Initial projects

B. Editing the Dictionary 44

1. Vital thread of Academy's existence

2. Labor on successive editions

a. Vaugelas in charge of first edition

1. Words grouped according to roots

b. Later editions adopt change of order

1. Words grouped alphabetically

C. Recent appearance of French Grammar 46

1. Project secondary to Dictionary

2. Aim of the Grammar

Page

b. Referred to as "Academicians"

c. Reception oration

d. Compensation for members

e. Meetings in Louvre, 1803-1805

1. In Collège Mazarin, 1805-1815

f. Prizes established

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C. Recent appearance of French Grammar 46

1. Project secondary to Dictionary

2. Air of the Grammar

Page

D. Annual Prize Awards 47

1. About 150 in number

2. In recognition of distinctive achievements

III. Its Significance 49

A. Important literary body

B. Language authority 53

C. Present personnel - men of prestige 55

Summary 59

Bibliography 63

Page

D. Annual Prize Awards 47

1. About 150 in number

2. In recognition of distinctive achievements

III. Its Significance 49

A. Important literary body

B. Language authority 53

C. Present personnel - men of prestige 55

Summary 59

Bibliography 63

I. Its Origin and History.

A. Early French prototypes

The French Academy whose history we shall forthwith trace is not unique in its origin or purpose. As a matter of fact, there have been similar groups dating even from the Middle Ages, whose motive was the development and embellishment of the French language.

'The poets of the South of France during the Middle Ages called themselves "Trobadors", and they adapted the language of their region to the expression of poetical sentiments. Their most distinguished poetical talent was probably displayed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it was at this time that the Troubadours were so greatly honored by the courts of Toulouse and Provence who vied with one another in paying them homage. The destruction of the county of Toulouse in 1271 was the death-blow to the existence of the Troubadours. The poets and the political powers of the North advanced on them with an annihilating force, and they had only enemies to control them. This distressing situation induced them after a while, to associate themselves into a body, and this movement gave rise to the Academy of the Very Gay Company of the Seven Troubadours of Toulouse, which was founded in 1323. The Academy held an annual convention "to which were invited 'honorable lords, friends and companions who possess the science whence spring joy,

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pleasure, good sense, merit and politeness' to assemble in their garden of the 'gay science,' and recite their works."[1] During these sessions, prizes were distributed for the best productions. These floral games survived till about the year 1500, being maintained at the city's expense. In 1694, the Academy of Floral Games was constituted an academy by letters-patent of Louis XIV.'[2]

As early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was an interest felt in the development and improvement of the French language. Latin was flourishing during this period in France, and many authors were turning to it as a medium of expression for their writings. This was a great source of alarm for those, such as Baif, du Bellay and their confreres who believed firmly that the French language had possibilities as great as any of the ancient languages and needed only to be developed. Their theories are ably expressed by du Bellay in his manifesto, "La Défense et Illustration de la langue française", in which he makes a strong plea for continued interest in the development, enrichment and potentialities of his native language. From this time, date treatises on spelling, accents, grammar and the like. The French language, being still in a more or less formative state, the Pléiade sought to develop and

1. Encyclop. Brittanica - See "Academies"
2. Fauriel, Intro. - pp. xiii - xix

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1. Gaugler, Dictionnaire - Les "Académies"
2. Larousse, Lettre - pp. xiii - xix

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Too, 'Jean-Antoine de Baif became convinced that verse, in France, as in Greece or Rome, should be sung to the accompaniment of the lyre or a similar instrument, for its real rhythm was lost if it was simply recited.'[1] He realized, however, that this ideal union of literature and music could only be acquired through study; therefore, this feature, too, became a part of the program of that group known as the Pléiade, who were the first to labor so assiduously in the interests of the French language and its literature. Side by side in this group, then, worked poets and musicians. The group so pleased the king, Charles IX, that he gave it legal status in 1570, three years after its foundation. It was then officially known as the "Académie de poésie et de musique". This was the first organization definitely formed with a view to improving the French language, and it enjoyed considerable success for a period, under the king's favor. Once this ceased, however, it was not long before the Academy passed into oblivion.

With the advent into power of Henry III, Guy du Faur de Pibrac, a poet, was instrumental in reviving Baif's Academy. However, he enlarged the scope of work it was to undertake, so

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Another important development, which might well be mentioned at this point, is the salon, an institution which though not typically academic in purpose or character, exerted nevertheless a potential influence on contemporary language and literature. This new movement gained ground rapidly during the decade immediately preceding the establishment of the French Academy.

The Hôtel de Rambouillet was the first salon of high standing and functioned as a sort of literary tribunal. During the first period of its existence (1620-1630) it was frequented by a great variety of intellectual and cultured people, prominent among whom were men of letters, a class, who up to that time held an equivocal position in society. Notable among the men of letters were: the old poet François de Malherbe, who labored with his followers in the interest of purifying the French language, and regulating its versifica-

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The Hôtel was originally instituted by the Marquise de Rambouillet as a center where men and women might meet for the interchange of ideas, amid pleasant surroundings. The atmosphere was decidedly different from the situation at the court during Henry IV's reign, characterized as it was at that time by rude manners and intrigue, conditions extremely revolting to the Marquise.

It was perhaps, during its second (1630-1638) and later periods that the Hôtel reached its peak of greatest splendor. The names of such guests as Saint-Evrémont, François de La Rochefoucauld, Olivier Patru, Jean Mairet, Georges de Scudéry and Paul Scarron attest this fact. Its great interest in literature may be seen in the fact that it took the part of Pierre Corneille against Richelieu, in the sensational quarrel of the Cid.

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the words of Chapelain, who says of the guests at the Hôtel: 'They do not talk learnedly, but they do talk reasonably, and there is no place in the world where there is more good sense.' There were among other things, parlor lectures, readings and discussions of new works. Undoubtedly, the people of the Hôtel influenced the growth and development of the French language, for, educated and cultured as they were, their use of words offered a standard for others to conform to. They recognized that good breeding involved good speech, as well as fine manners and dress, and with this attitude on the question of language, it is not to be wondered at, that they gave so much time to the question of correct speech. It is true, however, that as time went on the ultra-refinement of the habitués of the salon deteriorated into a ridiculously exaggerated state of affectation.

This brief sketch of the programme of the first literary salon shows to some degree the influence that both it, and likewise its contemporaries and successors had on the French language and literature.

Next in order of interest in the French Academy, an institution which will be studied in greater detail.

B. The French Academy of the Old Regime

It is most interesting to trace through its three hundred years of rather troubled existence the history of the French Academy. Its lowly and humble beginnings date back

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to the year of 1629 when a group of nine friends interested in literary matters met weekly at Valentin Conrart's. These literati were to some extent frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but at Conrart's private reunions to which they gave the name of "Petite Académie" they were under far less restraint, and more at ease, removed from the magnificence and pomp of that fashionable rendez-vous. Boissier asserts that these weekly reunions were started at the instigation of Antoine Godeau, cousin of Conrart. It appears that Godeau's poetry had aroused much favourable comment in his own locale. Desirous, then, of making the acquaintance of some of the "beaux esprits" in Paris, he prevailed upon Conrart, also a devotee of poetry, to assemble several of his literary friends, so that Godeau might read to them some of his works. The success and popularity of this coterie which, unlike the Hôtel de Rambouillet, restricted its discussions wholly to literature is attested by the fact that all of the members were anxious to continue the weekly meetings--each eager for the occasion to present his offering for the intellectual delight of his comrades. The meetings were of an informal nature, and expressions of approval or criticism of each other's works were freely given at these delightfully unpretentious, intellectual feasts. "It was resolved by the friends that their assemblies, which were, indeed, contrary to an inquisitorial law of the time, as being held without official permission, should be kept

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secret."[1] The original group remained intact for some time, until one of the members through some indiscretion revealed the existence of the coterie. Subsequently, several members were added to the group. One of these, the Abbé de Boisrobert, was intimate with Cardinal Richelieu and soon communicated to him the details of the association. He delayed not in indicating to Richelieu the advantage it would be for him to patronize this group of writers and to direct their undertakings and literary ambitions. This aspect of it charmed Richelieu for he felt that these men might now, as his protégés, combat the insolent and vitriolic attacks which were being constantly leveled at their patron.

Master organizer that he was, Richelieu was now greatly pleased with this opportunity to organize literature. He delayed not in proposing to the men his project for establishing them under state authority, with definite laws and regulations. When first presented, the proposition proved none too alluring, and the group was not disposed to favor acceptance of the suggestion. However, after much hesitation, it was decided to accept the Cardinal's proposal. 'Any other course, it appeared, would be unwise, for an all-powerful minister could not safely be offended.'[2] Boisrobert was then commissioned to accept in the name of the company the intended

1. Robertson, p. 4
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1. Fortnightly, p. 4
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The laws drawn up by this body soon after its official organization are in force today with few changes. Among the earliest arrangements was the decision to increase its membership to forty, thereby admitting twenty-eight new confreres. Many of those elected were men, preferably residents of Paris, renowned at that time for their brilliant writings, but whose names are unknown to posterity, obscured as much by time, perhaps, as by more brilliant successors. "Most of them were of noble or good family connection and the fifteenth article of the Academy's Statutes established their equality in the Academy."[1] However, two writers of merit were numbered among the original Forty, Voiture and Balzac. The tendency of the Academy seems to have been even from the beginning, to number in its ranks dramatic authors, historians, orators, poets, and journalists, as well as other types of learned men. It has never sought to restrict its membership to men representing any particular field of writing.

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1. Rochetaux, p. 7

"From the beginning of March, 1634, formal assemblies were held by the Academy, and the proceedings at them were duly recorded in minutes, one of the first questions discussed and settled being the name which the institution should assume. There were, then, no other academies in France, and that of Académie Française (spelled at the time Françoise) or French Academy, was chosen as being at once modest and expressive."[1] Time has shown the name to be well-chosen, significant and most appropriate. For a while, the members were called "Académistes", but the official designation was soon changed to "Académicien." Robertson, in a footnote, quotes the Academy's definition of these two words as given in the first edition of its Dictionary:

> "Académicien - qui est de quelque Académie de gens de lettres: les Académiciens de l'Académie Française, les Académiciens de la Crusca
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> "Académiste -- qui apprend à monter à cheval et autres exercices dans une Académie."[2]

Herein lies, then, the distinction felt by the members of the Academy between these two words, and led them to effect a change in their title.

At the end of the year 1634, the Academy presented its proposed constitution to Richelieu for his approval, which it received without delay. The fifty rules adopted are as follows:

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2. ibid. p. 9

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[1] "1. No person shall be received into the Academy who shall not be agreeable to Monseigneur the Protector, and of good morals, good reputation, good intelligence, and fitted for academical functions.

2. The Academy shall have a seal, by which shall be sealed in blue wax all acts despatched by its order; in which the face of Monseigneur the Cardinal Duke of Richelieu shall be engraved, with the words roundabout: ARMAND, CARDINAL DUC DE RICHELIEU, PROTECTEUR DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇOISE, établie l'an mil six cent XXXV, and a counter-seal, on which shall be represented a crown of laurel, with this legend: A L'IMMORTALITÉ; of which seals the impression may never be changed for any reason whatsoever.

3. There shall be three officers: A Director, a Chancellor, and a Secretary, of whom the two first shall be elected every two months, and the other shall not be changed.

4. In making this election, there shall be placed in a box as many white balls as there shall be Academicians in Paris; two of which shall be marked, one with one black spot and the other with two: of these the first shall designate the Director and the second the Chancellor.

5. In the absence of the Director the Chancellor shall preside at all the meetings, ordinary and extraordinary, and in the absence of the Chancellor, the Secretary.

1. Robertson, pp. 10-16

"1. No person shall be received into the Academy who shall not be agreeable to Monseigneur the Protector, and of good morals, good reputation, good intelligence, and fitted for academical functions.

2. The Academy shall have a seal, by which shall be sealed in blue wax all acts despatched by its order: in which the face of Monseigneur the Cardinal Duke of Richelieu shall be engraved, with the words roundabout: ARMAND, CARDINAL DUC DE RICHELIEU, PROTECTEUR DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇOISE, établie l'an mil six cent XXXV, and a counter-seal, on which shall be represented a crown of laurel, with this legend: A L'IMMORTALITÉ: of which seals the impression may never be changed for any reason whatsoever.

3. There shall be three officers: A Director, a Chancellor, and a Secretary, of whom the two first shall be elected every two months, and the other shall not be changed.

4. In making this election, there shall be placed in a box as many white balls as there shall be Academicians in Paris: two of which shall be marked, one with one black spot and the other with two: of these the first shall designate the Director and the second the Chancellor.

5. In the absence of the Director the Chancellor shall preside at all the meetings, ordinary and extraordinary, and in the absence of the Chancellor, the Secretary.

. Pelletier, pp. 10-16

6. The Chancellor shall have in keeping the seals of the Academy, to seal all the acts despatched.

7. The Secretary shall be elected by the votes of the Academicians, assembled to the number of twenty at least. He shall note the resolutions of all the meetings and keep a register of them, sign all the acts which may be granted by the Academy, and keep all the deeds and instruments concerning its institution, its function, and its interests, of which he shall not communicate anything to any person without the permission of the Society.

8. At the beginning of the year there shall be made two lists of all the Academicians, which shall be signed by all the Officers, and carried to the registry offices of the Hôtel du Roi and the Requêtes du Palais, to be referred to when necessary.

9. If any Academician shall desire to have a testimonial from the Society, as evidence of membership, the Secretary shall furnish him with a certificate signed by him and sealed with the seal of the Academy.

10. The Society may neither receive nor depose an Academician, unless assembled to the number of twenty at least, who shall indicate their opinions by balls, of which each Academician shall have one white and one black; in case of a reception the number of white balls must exceed by four that of black; but, for deposition, the

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number of black balls must, on the contrary, exceed by four that of white.

11. In all other matters, voting shall be oral and in turn, without interruption or jealousy, without noticing with heat or disrespect the judgment of any one, without saying more than necessary, and without repeating what shall have been said.

12. When the votes shall be equal, the matter shall be postponed for deliberation in another meeting.

13. If one of the Academicians shall commit any action unworthy of a man of honour, he shall be suspended or deposed, according to the importance of his fault.

14. When any one shall be received into the Society, he shall be exhorted, by whoever shall preside, to observe all the statutes of the Academy, and shall sign the act of his reception on the Secretary's register.

15. Whoever shall preside shall keep good order in the meetings as strictly and as civilly as possible, and in a manner fitting among equals.

16. He shall put all the questions which shall be brought forward in the meetings and announce the result, after having taken the opinions of all those present, in the order in which seated, beginning with whoever may be on his right, himself voting last.

17. The ordinary meetings shall be held every Monday in the places which shall be judged most convenient by the

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17. The ordinary meetings shall be held every Monday in the places which shall be judged most convenient by the

Directors, until it shall please the king to provide one, and shall begin at two o'clock after noon precisely.

18. Nothing shall be decided in the meetings, unless composed of twelve Academicians at least, and one of the three Officers.

19. No member who may be in Paris shall be dispensed from attendance at the meetings, and especially at those treating of the reception or deposition of an Academician, or the approbation of a work, without legitimate excuse, which shall be made in the Society by one of the members present, at the request of whoever may not have been able to attend.

20. Persons not members of the Academy shall not be admitted to its meetings, ordinary or extraordinary, for any reason or on any pretext whatsoever.

21. There shall not be offered for deliberation any matter concerning religion; nevertheless, inasmuch as, in the works which shall be examined, it is impossible but that some proposition regarding that subject should be met with, as the noblest exercise of eloquence and the most useful discourse of the intelligence, there shall be nothing delivered on maxims of that nature; the Academy submitting always to the laws of the Church, in that which concerns things holy, the opinions and approbations which it shall give (?add, shall be) as to the terms and the form of the works solely.

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22. Matters political and moral shall be treated in the Academy only in conformity with the authority of the Prince, the state of the government, and the laws of the realm.

23. Care shall be taken that there may not be employed in the works which shall be published under the name of the Academy or of an individual in the quality of Academician, any loose or licentious term, open to equivocal or evil interpretation.

24. The principal function of the Academy shall be to labour with all the care and diligence possible to give exact rules to our language and to render it capable of treating the arts and the sciences.

25. The best authors of the French language shall be distributed among the Academicians for the purpose of noting the terms and phrases which may serve for general rules and of making a report of them to the Society, which shall judge of their utility and make use of them as necessary.

26. There shall be composed a Dictionary, a Grammar, a treatise on Rhetoric (une Rhétorique), and a treatise on Poesy (une Poétique), after the observations of the Academy.

27. Every day of ordinary meeting, one of the Academicians, in his turn, shall make an oration in prose, of which the delivery, by heart or by lecture, at his option, shall last a quarter of an hour or half an hour

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at the most, on any subject he may choose, not to begin until three o'clock. The rest of the time shall be employed in examining works which may be presented, or in labouring on the general compositions mentioned in the preceding article.

28. As soon as each of these orations shall have been delivered in the Academy, whoever presides shall name two Commissioners to examine it, who shall make their report upon it one month thereafter at the latest to the Society, which shall judge of their observations; and, in the month following, the author corrects those places which it shall have indicated, and, having communicated the corrections which it (? which he) shall have made to its Commissioners, if they shall find them in accordance with the intentions of the Society, he shall place a copy of his oration in the hands of the Secretary, who shall issue to him the approbation thereof.

29. The same order shall be observed in the examination of the other works which shall be submitted to the judgment of the Academy, according to whose length whoever shall preside may name a greater number of Commissioners; and if any one of those he shall appoint alleges sufficient reason why he should be excused, another shall be named in his place.

30. The copy of the work which shall have been proposed for examination in the Academy, after having been read,

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shall be placed in the hands of the Secretary, for safe keeping; the author shall also deliver a copy to each of the Commissioners; and, when the composition shall have been approved, he shall deliver another, corrected, to the Secretary, who shall restore to him the first when handing him the act of approbation, which copy shall be signed by the Author, the Director, and the Secretary, for the justification of the Academy, if the work should be published in any other form than as approved.

31. The Commissioners shall make their report, within the time prescribed to them, of the work which they shall have examined, unless, for important reasons, they should demand an extension, which shall be accorded or refused, according to the merit of the excuse, at the judgment of the meeting.

32. The Commissioners shall not communicate to any one the compositions with which they shall have been intrusted, nor the observations, and shall not retain a copy of them on pain of deposition.

33. Those who shall have been appointed to examine a composition must, if they leave Paris, deliver it into the hands of the Secretary, with the remarks which they shall have made thereon; and if they should not have made any, the Academy shall name other Commissioners in their stead.

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35. When a work shall have been approved by the Academy, the Secretary shall write the resolution thereof in his register, which shall be signed by the Director and the Chancellor.

36. The approbations which shall be delivered to the authors of works which have been examined in the Society shall be written on parchment, signed by the Officers, and sealed with the seal of the Academy.

37. All the approbations shall be given without eulogy, and conformably to the formulary which shall be inserted at the end of the present Statutes.

38. To deliberate on the publication of a work by the Academy, the meeting shall consist of twenty Academicians at least, Officers included; and, if there should not be a majority of four, the question shall not be considered settled, but shall be again discussed in another meeting.

39. The approbations of personal works may be proposed in a meeting of twelve Academicians and one of the Officers, and a majority of one shall suffice to accord them.

40. No one may print the approbation which he shall have received from the Academy; but he may insert at the first or the last page of the printed work, 'by order of the French Academy'. And, if he shall not have had the work examined in the Academy, or shall not have had its approbation, he may not indicate therein his quality of

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41. Those who shall print compositions approved by the Academy may not change anything in them, after the approbation shall have been delivered, without the consent of the Society.

42. If the dedication or the preface of a book be reviewed in the Society without the rest, approbation shall only be given for that which shall have been examined, and the author may not place in the printed work his quality of Academician, although he may have the approbation of the Academy for a part of it.

43. The general rules which shall be made by the Academy, concerning the language, shall be followed by all members of the Society who shall write either in prose or in verse.

44. They shall also follow the rules which shall be made for orthography.

45. The Academy shall only judge the works of those of whom it is composed; and if it should be obliged for any reason to examine those of others, it will only give its opinion, without making any censure and also without giving approbation.

46. Should anything be written against the Academy, no one of the Academicians shall undertake to reply thereto or to publish anything in its defense, without being expressly so charged by the Society, assembled to the number of twenty at least.

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48. The Academy shall choose a printer, to print the works which shall be published under its name and those of its members which it shall have approved; but as to those which members may desire to publish, without approbation and without the quality of Academician, it shall be open to them to employ any printer they please.

49. The printer shall be elected by the votes of the Academicians and shall make oath of fidelity to the Society before the Director or whoever shall preside.

50. He may not associate any person with him so far as it shall concern the works of the Academy, or those which it shall have approved, of which he shall print nothing but from the copy which shall be delivered to him under the sign manual of the Director or the Secretary, and it shall be forbidden him to change anything therein without the permission of the Society, under penalty of personally answering for the consequences, of reprinting it at his own expense, and of being declared fallen from the favour which shall have been accorded to him by the Academy."

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Modification of these regulations and relaxation in adhering to certain ones can be noted in scattered cases through different stages of the Academy's history, but for the most part they are observed today as originally drawn up.

Procuration of a public charter was realized in January, 1635, the official date of the Academy's entry into existence under Richelieu's protectorate. Confirmation by Parliament proved an obstacle, seemingly insurmountable, until 1637, when the privileges accorded the Academy by the King were formally recognized and verified. Parliament's action in refusing to grant the letters-patent up to this time reflected also, the attitude of men of letters towards this new literary tribunal. In general, it was feared that this organization would prove to be nothing more than a puppet, subject to Richelieu's bidding. Time proved that this uneasiness was not wholly warranted.

Richelieu was most anxious that the Academy should undertake some purposeful work. At first, he had been particularly anxious to have it pass judgment on and correct his own literary endeavors. Now, Corneille's "Le Cid" having appeared recently and received an enthusiastic ovation, it arrested his attention. He proposed, after Scudery's challenging statements about the work, that the Academy should make a critical study of the play, and his will prevailed over their objections and reluctance to undertake the task. After several months' work, "Sentiments de l'Academie sur le Cid" was

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Shortly after Richelieu's death, Chancellor Séguier was offered the protectorship of the Academy, and he readily accepted the honor. Not long afterwards, Séguier announced to the members that he wished them to hold their future meetings at his residence. No longer were they to be a "homeless" organization. Under Séguier's guidance for 30 years the Academy passed through a comparatively tranquil period in its history. Work on the Dictionary progressed slowly, but its first edition was not to appear for many years more.

One of the seemingly radical resolutions adopted by the Academy at this time, 1671, was the decision to open its doors to the public at the formal receptions of new Academicians--a ruling directly in opposition to Statute No. 20, which provides that 'persons not members shall not be admitted to its sessions for any pretext whatsoever'. It has been said that the Academy grew in fame from then on; from

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From this period, too, date the earliest prize awards. 'Balzac, in 1654, had established a fund to provide for a Prize for Eloquence. It was awarded in 1672, for the first time, to Mlle. de Scudéry--circumstances of previous years preventing its being offered for competition. Balzac had specified that the theme of the discourse was to be of a religious nature ending with a prayer to Jesus Christ, and subject to the approval of 2 doctors of the Faculty of Paris. This condition was observed for practically a century; then, after a few years of relaxed rulings, these original conditions were reverted to. There was also, a Poetry Prize awarded simultaneously, for the best eulogy of Louis XIV. The poem was to end with a prayer to God for the King, but, the theme has since been varied. This latter prize was donated by the Academicians themselves, and later established as a biennial prize through a bequest made by Clermont-Tonnerre, Bishop of Noyon.'[1]

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This did not mark, however, the extent of Louis's bounty towards the Academy. It seems that up to this time, only the director of the Academy occupied a fauteuil during the sessions. This practice was scored by many of the members, and a remedy was effected only by providing each with

tectorship of the Academy upon the death of Séguier, thereby attracting greater public attention to the group and establishing a precedent by virtue of which the head of the State was always the protector of the Academy. Louis's first consideration, as was that of his predecessor, was to provide suitable quarters for the members. Whereupon, he assigned them an apartment in the Louvre. This was destined to be its "home" until the era of suppression in 1793. Previous to this time, there had been no definite system of remunerating the Academicians. Now, however, Louis provided that silver tokens of attendance, to the number of 40, were to be distributed at each meeting, but only to those who were prompt in arriving at the scheduled hour. Tokens left over were to be added to those distributed at the following meeting. The assiduous member probably realized at the least, an annual revenue of about 800 francs. The value of the jeton did not always maintain its original worth; in 1789, its value was increased to three livres, which was just about double. Louis was generous with the Academy also, in allowing a fund to be set apart for the miscellaneous expenses it incurred, such as in heating and lighting.

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a fauteuil. Although several versions are offered of this incident, one account avers that it was some of the high dignitaries and personages among the Academicians who objected to the distinction between the director and themselves as ill-becoming their rank; prevision on the part of the King prompted his handling of the situation as he did, so as to preclude the development of any serious friction among the members. Evidence also of his gracious relations with the Academy lies in the fact that early in his protectorship he extended to each Academician the right of Committimus, 'a privilege hitherto restricted to the four eldest members in order of their reception'.[1] This favor entitled the group to the privilege of addressing the king at court on the most solemn occasions, and the right to plead its own cases before the king, thus obviating the necessity of legal proceedings in courts. A desire to banish jealousy among members and the desire to concur with the tenor of Statute No. 15 which stresses the equality of the Academicians, undoubtedly motivated Louis to bestow on the Academy these two favors last mentioned.

Meetings were held now three times a week, every effort being bent to advance work on the Dictionary as quickly as possible. However, it was a laborious and painstaking task, requiring much work in analyzing the significance of words, before a satisfactory definition could be formed.

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*Fabiatteau, p. 77

About 1672, the famous Dictionary was sent to the printer, but was shortly afterwards withdrawn, a decision having been reached to revise the work from the beginning to the end. The members spent about twenty years more on the work and it was printed and offered to the public for the first time in 1694 after approximately a half a century's labor in all being spent in its composition. When the work was withdrawn for its final revision, the Academicians realized that this would mean years more of labor, so they sought to protect themselves and their enterprise, and obtained a special privilege prohibiting the publication of any French dictionary previous to that of the Academy's or within twenty years after its appearance. A violation of this ruling was made by one of its own members, Antoine Furetière, who sought the right to publish a dictionary containing only terms of the arts and sciences, (words not included in the Academy's work.) When the permission to proceed with his work had been obtained, he secretly altered the title of his work, so as to make it include all French words. This aroused the Academy's suspicions that he was guilty of plagiarism. Investigations were made, Furetière interrogated, and his manuscripts submitted, upon request, to the Academy for examination, with the result that Furetière was excluded from further membership in the Academy, but his successor was not appointed, however, until after his death.

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many years, realized that the time was near when he must secure from his confrere, François Charpentier, the right to have his work printed. Thereupon, he invited the latter to a dinner, which was an excellent one, improved by an abundance of excellent wine. With his guest thus sated, he presented for approval, his manuscript entitled "Dictionnaire Universel des Arts et des Sciences." Charpentier, judging the work by its title saw nothing suspicious in it and signed the order allowing it to be printed. When Charpentier had departed Furetière enlarged upon the title in this way, "Dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tous les mots français, tant vieux que modernes et les termes des arts et des sciences." Such was the plan and method of his treachery.

Another comment on the incident is to the effect that upon the demise of François Eudes de Mézeray, Furetière was commissioned to call upon the heirs of the deceased and to procure from them the manuscript of one or two letters of the dictionary which were in the former's possession at the time of his death. These in his possession proved too strong a temptation for Furetière and he availed himself of this wealth of work for his own dictionary.

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means Furetière resorted in order to further the progress of his project.

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Criticism, along with freedom of thought and speech seemed to be the prevailing trend as years passed. The Academy was criticized because of the favors conferred upon it by royalty, and the money expended in the support of it, and sister academies. This freedom of expression was found even among members of the Academies, resulting in the suspension of one member, the Abbé de Saint Pierre, who in his "Discours sur la Polysynodie", criticized Louis XIV, whom he "censures for waging unjust wars, for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and deems unworthy of the addition to his name of the appellation 'Great', that of 'Powerful', or 'Redoubtable', being mentioned as more appropriate".[1] Needless to say, this caused a sensation and stir in court circles.

As years passed, more of these free-speakers and free-thinkers, called Philosophers, were numbered in the ranks of the Academy. Early among these was Charles de Secondat de

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Montesquieu who had on previous occasions bitterly satirized the group, particularly in his "Lettres Persanes".

Excerpts from one of his letters will serve to show the tone of some of his satire.

"J'ai ouï dire d'une espèce de tribunal qu'on appelle l'Académie française; il n'y en a point de moins respecté dans le monde: car on dit qu'aussitôt qu'il a décidé, le peuple casse ses arrêts et lui impose des lois qu'il est obligé de suivre.

"Ceux qui le composent n'ont d'autre fonction que de jaser sans cesse:--

"Ce corps a quarante têtes, toutes remplies de figures, de métaphores et d'antithèses; tant de bouches ne parlent presque que par exclamations: ses oreilles veulent toujours etre frappées par la cadence et l'harmonie. Pour les yeux, il n'en est pas question: il semble qu'il soit fait pour parler, et non pas pour voir. Il n'est point ferme sur ses pieds car le temps, qui est son fléau, l'ébranle à tous les instants et détruit tout ce qu'il a fait. On a dit autrefois que ses mains étaient avides; je ne t'en dirai rien, et je laisse décider cela à ceux qui le savent mieux que moi."

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"Gradually the cordial relations between the Academy and its protector were to undergo a change, and to be succeeded by mutual distrust and even antagonism. As the years passed, the despotic Monarch developed a hatred of the party of Philosophers as strong as he was capable of feeling, while the Academy, on the other hand, ended by admitting into its body most of the leaders of the new movement and becoming more or less completely dominated by their doctrines, social, political, and theological."[2] One instance of the strained relations

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2. ibid. p.91

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1. Robertson, p.95
2. Ibid. p.19

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Louis's hatred for the party of Philosophers in the Academy increased as their "numbers became strengthened by additional recruits, the reception discourses of its open sessions, and the compositions of its prize-winners teemed with allusions, indirect or pointed and more or less just, reflecting on the administration of public affairs."[3]

These occurrences provoked official irritation, and the Academy, sensing that its freedom of speech was marking its unpopularity with Louis and his government officials, probably saved itself from extinction by heeding the royal caution that the future discourses of its members be examined in private

1. Robertson, p. 95
2. ibid. p. 96
3. ibid. p. 102

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During the protectorate of Louis XVI, who succeeded Louis XV, deceased in 1774, there was a strong spirit of dissension prevailing among the Academicians. There were some members among the Philosophers, newly admitted, who were rather liberal in their views and critical of the existing regime. Their views were obviously in contrast to those of the Academicians who still adhered to the older traditions. In all, it was an age of criticism and raillery, even the Academy itself receiving its full share. Censure was leveled at it for several reasons. It was accused of being an institution with monarchical tendencies 'the fact being that since it owed its inception and brilliancy to the monarchy, it was suspected of being inclined to regret seeing any political changes.'[1] That which also rendered institutions and associations such as these, odious to the general public was the fact that they enjoyed certain privileges never extended to the masses--in the case of the Academy, particularly the Right of Committimus and the payment of the jeton were criticized.

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As the new theories and teachings continued to spread more vigorously, royalty saw itself ever on the wane; the public grew less and less cordial to the Academy, royalty's protégé, neglecting to attend the open sessions and even questioning the utility of the organization and the justification for its support by the government. Much of the hostility shown the Academy was probably inspired by the discourses of Chamfort, the renegade Academician, who so gallantly bowed to the traditions of the past when first elected a member, but who later revealed himself as one of its most bitter critics. His disloyalty and duplicity in betraying his confreres, by frequenting the Academy and then openly laying siege to it with a fusillade of criticisms attacking its rules, its routine, including the receptions which he declared to be "ridiculous exhibitions"[1] and finally its utility, undoubtedly helped to prepare the ruin of the Academy. Its chief work, the Dictionary, he characterized as a shabby piece of work. Chamfort sought to convey the idea that the Academy was not in harmony with the new order of things, that conceived as it was under despotism, it could never sever itself from those principles, and he called for its abolition because he saw surviving in it vestiges of royal favoritism and protection, an odious thing then decried as "inequality". This action on the part of Chamfort cannot but reveal him as an ingrate, oblivious

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Criticism was one of the ways in which the "free thought" movement of the eighteenth century manifested itself. It was clearly seen in the writings of such men as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and d'Alembert among others, who openly avowed their dissatisfaction with the existing political order. Most of their works were of an anti-monarchical nature, and considerably effective in fanning the flames for the Revolution.

Literature, through the activity of the Philosophers aided the Revolution, and it, in turn, enriched literature with two new fields, political eloquence and journalism. Outstanding among the orators were Mirabeau, Danton, and Robespierre whose highly animated and dramatic discourses usually dealt with some abuses of the old regime.

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Previous to the Revolution, papers and other publications were of a literary, scientific or religious character. During the Revolution, daily newspapers of a political nature made their appearance. The development of this type of writing was very remarkable and rapid, and many newspapers were established at this time. Needless to say, their influence on public opinion was considerable and far-reaching.

With everything in the existing social and political order, from the King down, an object of attack, it would be surprising if an institution of monarchical origin escaped unscathed. And the Academy did not escape unscathed. We have already mentioned Chamfort's vitriolic attacks on it. In addition, an aroused and resentful people called for the abolition of all patented and privileged groups which were regarded as detrimental to society, for they savoured of the monarchy.

The Academy was aware of the changing temperament of the people, of the adverse opinions held of it, and the ill-will manifested towards it. Undoubtedly, it felt that suppression lay in its course. August 5, 1793, marks the date of the last meeting of the royal institution, with but four or five members in attendance. A few days later, a public decree in the name of the Convention announced the suppression of all academies and literary societies patented by the nation.

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C. Era of Suppression 1793-1803

France was torn at this time with internal dissension and strife. The people, who had so loudly condemned the privileges and tyranny of the nobility and who had witnessed the death of their king on the scaffold, were now being directed in their frenzy by Robespierre, a leading factor in the Jacobin party, which had gained supremacy in the Convention over the more moderate Girondists. The Jacobins were a most radical group of men. 'While they were in power, the Revolution entered upon its most terrible stage--the so-called Reign of Terror, when many guiltless victims were "proscribed" and subsequently sent to the guillotine because they aroused the suspicion of some members of the Committee of Public Safety. This committee was the medium through which the radical Jacobins performed their dreadful work. Robespierre, instigator of it all, was himself siezed in 1794, by the Convention and put on the scaffold.'[1] The fall of Robespierre gave France time to breathe, and the guillotine once more ceased to be the chief means of government.

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1. The World Book - "General Revolution"

from the federalists during the reign of the committees.'[1] The National Convention also sought to establish for France, after its bloodthirsty career, educational institutions and centers of instruction. Among others provided for in 1795, was a 'National Institute charged with the collection of discoveries and with the improvement of the arts and sciences'. It comprised three divisions--(1) Mathematical and Physical Sciences (2) Moral and Political Sciences (3) Literature and the Fine Arts. Those who conceived the plan for this Institute had no intention of reviving the recently suppressed Academies when they designated the above-mentioned three classes as the component parts of this institution. Theirs was to be regarded as something new and wholly independent of any previously-established groups. Further evidence of this lies in the fact that not one of the surviving Academicians was named among the original forty-eight charter members designated by the Directory. Two were later elected, however, before the list of one hundred and forty-four was completed.

The Institute survived the changing forms of government, and in 1801 the 'Consular body prescribed a uniform for the members, as follows: Grand costume---black coat, waistcoat or vest, breeches or pantaloons, full embroidered, with a branch of olive, in silk, deep green; French hat. Petit costume---

1. Mignet, p.283
2. Robertson, p.112

from the federalists during the reign of the committees.[1] The National Convention also sought to establish for France, after its bloodthirsty career, educational institutions and centers of instruction. Among others provided for in 1795, was a 'National Institute charged with the collection of discoveries and with the improvement of the arts and sciences'. It comprised three divisions--(1) Mathematical and Physical Sciences (2) Moral and Political Sciences (3) Literature and the Fine Arts. Those who conceived the plan for this Institute had no intention of reviving the recently suppressed Academies when they designated the above-mentioned three classes as the component parts of this institution. Their's was to be regarded as something new and wholly independent of any previously-established groups. Further evidence of this lies in the fact that not one of the surviving Academicians was named among the original forty-eight charter members designated by the Directory. Two were later elected, however, before the list of one hundred and forty-four was completed.

The Institute survived the changing forms of government, and in 1801 the 'Consular body prescribed a uniform for the members, as follows: Grand costume---black coat, waistcoat or vest, breeches or pantaloons, full embroidered, with a branch of olive, in silk, deep green; French hat. Petit costume---

1. Thiers, p. 483
2. Fontenay, p. 112

Same form and color, but having embroidery only on the collar and the cuffs of the sleeve, with a baguette on the border of the coat.'[1] The uniform prescribed at this time has changed during the course of the years, but the distinctive green embroidery is still characteristic of the costume.

Robertson tells us that 'about the year 1800 an effort was made to reestablish the French Academy, but the plan fell through when Napoleon upon his return to Paris refused to consent to the scheme. Although the plan had been favored in some quarters, there was much jealous opposition to it in the Institute and Napoleon had no desire to antagonize a section of his numerous colleagues; perhaps, too, he was none too eager to see the revival of one of the old institutions. To avert further attempts of this kind, the Institute resolved to begin the correction of the Dictionary.' Thus the hopes of Morellet, who lived in the expectation of seeing the return of the French Academy, were defeated.

D. As Second Class of the Institute (Fr. Lang. and Lit.)

The year 1803 witnessed a reorganization of the Institute. Napoleon had not been thoroughly in sympathy with the second class of Moral and Political Sciences. He feared anything which savoured of subversive tendencies. Consequently, in his reorganization of the Institute he made provision only

1. Robertson, p. 116

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for the following four classes: (1) Physical and Mathematical Sciences, (2) French Language and Literature, (3) Ancient History and Literature, (4) Fine Arts.

At this time we begin to note in the reorganized Institute a reversion to some of the original Academical customs. In the Second Class, with which we shall concern ourselves particularly, we find that the membership totals forty, with the group electing its own members when vacancies are to be filled. It was also to have a permanent secretary. As in the olden days, when nominations were submitted to the protector for confirmation, so now they must be submitted to the Government for approval. Even from the beginning, the new classes were often spoken of as Academies, with the Second Class openly referred to as the French Academy. In keeping with this, the members alluded to one another as "Academicians." This may not seem incongruous when it is explained that the ranks of this reorganized Institute numbered among others, some of the old Academicians.

Another interesting custom restored was the delivery of a reception oration by the newly-elected member in which he extolled the merits of his predecessor. It was not uncommon to hear the names of deceased Academicians of the Old Regime often referred to as predecessors, in this or that fauteuil, nor was it uncommon to hear the name of Napoleon, more or less the idol of the age, spoken in glowing terms of praise, as

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were those of the protectors of old. This is an interesting note because just a few years previous it was this excessive flattery and adulation accorded the king as protector of the Academy, that was so bitterly assailed by the Revolutionists.

Provision was also made for an annual compensation for the members, the amount being 1500 francs per member. However, this allowance was specified only for those who faithfully attended sessions. A deduction was made in the case of absent members. For a short while after its reestablishment, meetings were held in the Louvre, but in March, 1805, the group moved to new quarters, the College Mazarin, which has since been its home.

Napoleon also established prizes which were to be awarded by him for notable achievements. It is worthy of mention, perhaps, to state that the awards were never made, the money being diverted to other channels. "On one occasion, in speaking of these prizes which he instituted, Napoleon is said to have declared cynically in open council that his purpose in offering them had been 'to furnish occupation to the intellectuals in order to prevent them from occupying themselves with more serious matters'. His attitude toward the Academy was more tyrannical than had ever been that of its most monarchical protectors. When Chateaubriand's reception oration was submitted to him, its anti-revolutionary spirit so incensed

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Thus as we see the Academy recovering something of its former organization under Napoleon's tutelage, we also see it held in check by this dynamic person who exercised his powers with great force, and extended to it only the privileges he wished it to possess.

E. The Modern French Academy

The history of France records a very active state of military affairs with Napoleon in power. But Fate dealt harshly with him, and upon his deposition, the Bourbons, in the person of Louis XVIII, were recalled to the throne in 1814. This restoration was interrupted for a brief period by Napoleon's return from exile, during which time the former Emperor received the greatest defeat in his career. Subsequently, the Bourbons were restored to power.

It was during this period that the Institute experienced a second reorganization. The order of the Classes was changed, so that they ranked according to the date of their original establishment. Thus the French Academy ranked as the first class of the new Institute, now to be known as the

1. The Bookman, Sept. 1910 - Feb. 1911 pp. 573-575

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The meetings of the Institute are held in the College Mazarin. "Each Academy, besides having its own apartments and holding its own meetings, regular and special, as a constituent division of the Institute takes part in at least six regular annual sessions of the latter."[2] The meetings of the French Academy itself are private, there being one regular session held each week. However, receptions for newly elected members are open to the public. Its officers are the director and the chancellor, changeable every three months, and its permanent secretary.

Now as we see the Academy regaining its pristine glamour and significance, we see it also engaging itself seriously in its labours. The work on the Dictionary, its principal project, continues, with the eighth edition now in the course of preparation. The Dictionary, as of old, con-

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2. ibid. p. 130

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Thus, the intriguing history of this literary body is brought to the present time.

II. ITS FUNCTIONS

A. Initial Projects

The founder of the Academy realized that no literary institution can long survive unless it has some definite and purposeful work to accomplish. It was Richelieu, then, who first expressed a desire to see it engaged in some serious occupation, and he conceived the plan of having the Academy concentrate its labors on regulating the French language and fixing the meaning of its words. The initial projects which the Academy outlined in its programme were incorporated in its

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twenty-sixth Statute which provides that "there shall be composed a Dictionary, a Grammar, a treatise on Rhetoric, and a treatise on Poetry."

B. Editing the Dictionary

It is the Dictionary, though, which has constituted the mainspring of the Academy's functional activities; it seems, indeed, to have been its "raison d'être." The compilation of it was not looked upon or undertaken with any marked zeal at first, nor did the work proceed very rapidly. The Academicians felt the need of a directing force, a leader who knew exactly what should be done and who could organize the work. Vaugelas, because of his great love for the language, seemed best to qualify for this office; so, he was appointed editor, and arrangements were completed to make him the recipient of a pension in order that he might be able to devote all of his energy and time to the advancement of the Dictionary.

Work on this project progressed very slowly from the time it was started in 1639; in fact, the Academy was frequently made an object of ridicule because of the time it consumed in its labors. One critic among others urged the necessity for haste in the compilation of the Dictionary lest the final part of the book bear no relation to the first part. This remark was prophetic without intending to be, for we recall that the Academy spent twenty years in revising its first edition due to the fact that the language had changed considerably in those

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It was not until the appearance of the third edition in 1740 that any great changes were obvious in the organization of the Dictionary. The most outstanding among them were, first, the alphabetical grouping of words and, secondly, several changes effected in orthography, chief among which was the introduction of the accent mark to supplant silent 's'. Terms borrowed from arts and sciences were also recognized by the Academy at this time and introduced into the Dictionary.

In the fourth edition which appeared in 1762 two new letters were added to the alphabet, inasmuch as I was, henceforth, to be distinguished from J, and U from V. In this and successive editions, orthographical changes continue to appear, such as the writing of 'ai' instead of 'oi' in words like 'faiblesse' and 'parlait', thus conforming to the pronunciation, a change due mainly to Voltaire's good judgment. The use of the accents was also reduced to a system. The

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The second project called for on the Academy's programme was a Grammar. First evidence of the undertaking of this enterprise was apparent when the Abbe Regnier-Desmarais, Secretary from 1684-1713 published, with the approval of the Academy, the first part of a French Grammar, treating of the parts of speech. However, Fénélon, in his letter to the Academy, expresses the opinion that "a learned grammarian runs

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It was not again until the year 1932 that the Academy's Grammar came to the foreground. In it, the Academicians have set down those essential rules of grammar which are not arbitrary, and not subject to variations. But, because they are dealing with a living, and not a dead language, it is not possible for them to specify unreservedly, the absolute bounds of "good usage" in this matter of speaking and writing correctly.

This Grammar has been criticized by several, among them Ferdinand Brunot, in his "Observations sur la Grammaire de l'Académie Française." The Academy's work, he feels, is erroneous in many of its statements and replete with many inexactitudes. These, he feels, are inexcusable in a scholarly piece of work, and one, which, because of the Academy's prestige and position, will be regarded as authoritative.

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One of its most famous awards is the Prize of Eloquence, founded by Jean Louis de Balzac in 1654. It has a value of 300 francs and was won first by Mlle de Scudéry in 1671. The winner receives also a gold medal bearing on one side the effigy of St. Louis and on the other the Academy's device. The theme is to be of a religious nature.

Its Prize of Poetry dates also from that same early era, having been originally donated by several Academicians. In 1699, François de Clermont-Tonnerre, Bishop of Noyon, established it as a biennial prize. Its subject is to be a eulogium of Louis XIV.

Another famous and valuable prize over which it has jurisdiction is the Prize of Virtue. Interesting to note is the fact that this prize is most decidedly not of a literary nature. It was established by a philanthropist, Montyon by name, and its purpose is to commend and recompense the poor Frenchman who is judged to have done the most virtuous act during the year. The prize can be awarded to one person or divided among several, as the Academy deems advisable. Often, too, honorable mention is made of those who, although they did not win the prize, performed acts of virtue which are judged worthy of public commendation.

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III. ITS SIGNIFICANCE

A. Important literary body

By reason of its statutes which provide that its efforts be directed to the field of letters, the Academy is, in theory, a literary group. It is not to be inferred from this, though, that its choice of members has been confined solely to men of letters. On the contrary, it has, on occasions, honored with membership in its ranks, men who have distinguished themselves in other fields. For example, we find among others inscribed on its roster, the name of the eminent scientist, Louis Pasteur, that of the renowned engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the names of two generals, prominent during the late World War - Marshal Ferdinand Foch and Marshal Joseph Joffre, and finally the name of that great statesman, Georges Clemenceau. D'Alembert expresses his opinion to the effect that this is a wise procedure, for he believes that it is a mistaken conception of grandeur and literary brilliance to insist that the Academy should be composed exclusively of men of letters. He contends that it is more salutary to have many professions represented in the academical ranks than to have just poets, ignorant of everything outside their profession, dignified though it is. In general, however, it may be said, that membership in the Academy is, customarily, a token of reward bestowed on men of letters who have made their mark and laid the solid foundation of fame. It is not the prospective, but the actual achievement of a candidate that seats him in a

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fauteuil.

It is not difficult to recall the names of prominent men of letters who have figured in the Academy's history. Two of the original forty are well-known to students of French Literature - Balzac, often referred to as the "father of French prose", and Vaugelas, who is famous for his studies on the French language and the purity with which he wrote it. Since that early time, many illustrious names have been inscribed on the rolls of the Academy. To name a few, we have only to recall among the dramatists, Corneille, Racine, Marivaux and Rostand, - among the poets, Boileau, La Fontaine, and of a later date, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, de Musset, and de Vigny, - among the prose writers, such names as Montesquieu, Fénélon, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Voltaire and Chateaubriand. It would be impossible to give in this limited space adequate recognition to all the eminent personages that it has numbered in its membership. Those just mentioned will suffice to strengthen the assertion that the Academy's average of excellence has always been fairly good, in spite of the fact that first-class academical material has probably not been at all times superabundant.

However, it is a reproach often addressed to the French Academy that it has neglected the rightful claims of many a high master of the French language. In this connection I shall mention the legend of the forty-first fauteuil. By this fauteuil is meant the chair which ought to have been

fauteuil.

It is not difficult to recall the names of prominent men of letters who have figured in the Academy's history. Two of the original forty are well-known to students of French literature - Balzac, often referred to as the "father of French prose", and Vaugelas, who is famous for his studies on the French language and the purity with which he wrote it. Since that early time, many illustrious names have been inscribed on the rolls of the Academy. To name a few, we have only to recall among the dramatists, Corneille, Racine, Marivaux and Rostand. - among the poets, Boileau, La Fontaine, and of a later date, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, de Musset, and de Vigny, - among the prose writers, such names as Montesquieu, Fénélon, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Voltaire and Chateaubriand. It would be impossible to give in this limited space adequate recognition to all the eminent personages that it has numbered in its membership. Those just mentioned will suffice to strengthen the assertion that the Academy's average of excellence has always been fairly good, in spite of the fact that first-class academical material has probably not been at all times superabundant.

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created for those great writers who, somehow or other, failed to attain membership in the Academy. Indeed, a most distinguished occupancy can be shown for this imaginary seat, if we stop to enumerate some of the men of literary mark who have not been of the Academy, yet who have added lustre to the French language and name. To mention a few, we might recall the names of such literary lights as Descartes, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Rousseau, Honoré de Balzac, Dumas père, Saint Evrémont, Théophile Gautier, André Chenier, and that brilliant dramatist of the seventeenth century, Molière. Failure to elect him is still held up as an unpardonable sin of the institution. The Academy has, in a measure, however, made partial amends by setting up his bust in its assembly hall in the Louvre, with the following inscription: "Rien ne manque à sa gloire; il manquait à la nôtre."

Reasons have, of course, been proffered to explain the exclusion of various names. For example, in the case of Molière, his profession as an actor was frowned upon by contemporaries, and consequently the Academy regarded him with ill-favor. In the case of others, some were ineligible because they were not residents of Paris -- Descartes, for example, who spent much time in Holland. Saint Evrémont, no doubt, aroused the hostility and resentment of the Academicians by his satire, the "Comédie des Académistes". With some of the others, much of their literary fame has been posthumous.

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average observer cannot help but feel that its lustre might have been heightened by the infusion into its ranks of some of these brilliant men of letters.

Considering the Academy now from its position as a literary authority, we know both from its reputation and from the study of its history that it is the sovereign organ of the highest literary opinion and the recognized authority in matters of intellectual tone and taste. It is, indeed, all that its founder, Richelieu, wished it to be -- a high jury, the most choice and authoritative that could be formed, to pass judgment on important literary matters in question before the public.

In its official capacity, the Academy is chiefly concerned with affording an effectual resistance to the outgrowth or development of an inferior literature. Setting up standards, as it does, in a number of directions, it creates a force of educated opinion which is very consequential in checking those who fall below these, its standards, or those who flagrantly attempt to set them at naught. The French Academy, conservative as it is in its decisions, refuses to condone any extravagant irregularities in literary matters, whether of style, spelling or expression of thought. On the contrary, it commends precision. Is it to be wondered at that the Academy should continue to maintain its official status and character when we consider with what purity and perfection both it and its Dictionary have invested the French language?

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B. Language authority

This precision which the Academy insists on in literary standards, it also stresses in matters of the language itself. As we know, the Academy was, in the first place, founded to cleanse the French language from impurity and to render it capable of the loftiest eloquence. When the announcement of its program to reform the French language was made, the Academy did, to some extent, arouse the distrust and derision of the people in general, for the public is intolerant of aspersions cast on its speech or grammar, and it hesitated not to revile the early Academicians who expressed the belief that it lay in their power to improve the French language.

Evidence of the fact that the Academy was well aware of this hostility to its literary and linguistic authority can be seen in the course it pursued relative to the adjudication of the merits of the "Cid". It expressed itself as unwilling to pass judgment on this or any work except by consent and request of the author, for it realized that if the public couldn't endure even the appearance of an assumption of authority over the language, it would be less likely to tolerate any interference with a literary production to which it had given its approval.

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to bring that language to the highest perfection of which it is capable. They mingled with the best society and worked zealously and assiduously to cleanse the language and to establish a standard of correct speech. They outlined a program of work for themselves, and undertook as the first part of it the compilation of a Dictionary, and it must be said that this Dictionary does faithfully represent the Academy's honest and sincere efforts to ascertain and compile what is best in the language. In no way can it be classified as a "catch-all"; on the contrary, its composition shows that the Academy's principal objective was to make a careful selection of words, to choose between terms and determine what is best. No word was accepted on the basis that it was as good as another; evidence was carefully weighed before decisions which involved painstaking labours and great detail were finally made.

Recent efforts to coerce the Academy into the adoption of a reorganized system of orthography have been unavailing; the Academy refuses to abdicate its role as an authority in the language, for, in the end, would its Dictionary not cease to command respect if it once came to be regarded as but the echo of ministerial decrees? Fully cognizant of the supremacy it has enjoyed and exercised in decisions on matters of language, it refuses to submit to any new-fangled theories which are presented even though important pressure is brought to bear on it.

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C. Present personnel--men of prestige

As we know, the Academy does weigh a candidate's eligibility in the light of his actual achievements and consequent prestige. It is not to be wondered at, then, that its ranks are peopled with men who are distinguished and well-known to the world. The following is a curious fact that might well be mentioned at this point in connection with the eligibility of candidates for membership. The Academy still adheres to the ancient custom of requiring the candidates to apply for admission--in other words, to ask for the honor. It isn't enough that the man be eligible; he must say that he believes himself to be eligible--not in exactly those words, but by calling on the members individually and soliciting their votes in his behalf.

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Like his confrere, Paul Bourget, Henry Bordeaux is a novel writer whose works have brought him great fame. One of the most distinctive characteristics of his works is, undoubtedly, his tendency to moralize. The reader will almost always find that there is a worth-while lesson to be drawn from his stories.

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The latest election to the ranks of the Academicians is the novelist François Mauriac. His most famous work is probably his "Le Baiser aux Lépreux".

Following is a complete list of the present members, popularly known as the "Immortals". Once elected, they are, of course, members for life:

Paul Bourget	Louis Barthou
Gabriel Hanotaux	Alfred Baudrillart
Henri Emile Lavedan	Jules Cambon
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The above list contains the names of but thirty-nine members, due to the fact that no one has, up to the present time, been elected to succeed Henri Brémond, recently deceased. The following, however, are among those condidates seeking the election: Louis Gillet, Louis Artus, Jacques de Pesquidoux, André Bellesort, and Jacques Bainville.

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SUMMARY

"The French Academy is a society to which the word 'unique' may be applied. Whether one considers its object or its founder, or the distinguished men of which it has been composed, it is a company whose history is worthy of being understood and whose memoirs are worthy of being preserved."[1]

In order to appreciate fully the real significance and importance of the French Academy, we must realize that there is, perhaps, in France no academy or group which enjoys more prestige than does the French Academy, a venerable corporation which has had at its command during the various stages of its career some of the sharpest pens and tongues of the land. It is interesting to note that, during the lifetime of some of its present members--about two years hence, this organization will celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of its foundation.

The Academy is, in accordance with the present arrangement, a member of the Institute of France, one of the greatest sanctuaries of tradition which the French possess. As a division of the Institute it has a one-fifth interest in the endowments of the latter and takes part in at least six of its regular annual sessions, held at the Collège Mazarin, present home of the Institute. Like each of the other five constituents, it manages its own affairs, the bureau of the French

1. Vincent, The French Academy, p. 152

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*Lanson, The French Genius, p. 122.

Academy being in charge of a director and a chancellor changeable every three months and a permanent secretary.

Before the Academy was established the Hôtel de Rambouillet, chief among the salons, served as a sort of literary tribunal. Frequented as it was by educated and cultured people, it did, of course, exert great influence on contemporary language and literature. But, it was for the French Academy, officially established in 1635, to assume, definitely, the work of improving the French language and rendering it capable of the loftiest eloquence.

From its lowly beginnings when seven men met for the purpose of talking over literary matters and discussing their own literary endeavors, it quickly attained to a position of national importance when Richelieu, concerned as he was with the grandeur of France, sought to have it legally established. He felt that supremacy in arms did not suffice and he desired that France rank first also in letters and in arts. Consequently, he invested great power in the group and gave it a wide range of authority so as to make possible of accomplishment the objective he set for it. Thus it was that he established the position of the Academy.

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proposed to undertake the Academicians decided that the Dictionary should, logically, be their first choice. Work on it progressed slowly at first; however, it has proved to be the Academy's mainspring and its eighth edition is even now being prepared.

The control which the Academy has, in particular, exercised over the French language itself has been the main reason why it ranks foremost among the institutions of the nation. Its labours have been of infinite value in preserving the purity of the French language. In addition to this, it has always set a public example of devotion to literature and fostered the development of interest in it. However, though the Academy has admittedly served the nation well in the light of its respective enterprises, yet it has on many occasions felt the sting of bitter attacks.

At its very inception in 1634, it was looked upon dubiously by people in general, and, even the government expressed its uncertainty by delaying the grant of the charter for practically a year. As time went on, it was criticized because its labours on the Dictionary seemed unavailing; its progress was too slow for those who were clamoring for tangible results. Again, during the years immediately preceding the Revolution, it was, like all other institutions of monarchical origin, decried as odious and despotic. It was subsequently suppressed in 1793.

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Today, the Academy is, as it was during the early period of its history, a flourishing literary body, numbering within its ranks talented and world-renowned men of letters. Its most recent production was its long-awaited Grammar, which appeared in 1932. Its interests are centered, at present, on the preparation of the eighth edition of its Dictionary and on the adjudication of manuscripts submitted in its competitive prize contests. As mentioned previously, the Academy awards annually about 150 prizes.

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